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English : 英語で社会学

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Luncheon Meeting in English : Overview of an Extracurricular Learning Program

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Since its founding, the Institute for Advanced Social Research (IASR) has been contributing to the internationalization drive of Kwansei Gakuin University by offering a variety of dynamic programs for both academic and extracurricular activities to foster globally competent graduates. One of such programs is the Luncheon Meeting in English. This unique extracurricular learning program has been in effect since October 2016. The aim of the program is twofold. First, by providing a social space for students to discuss issues related to sociology in English regularly in an informal and friendly environment, it aims at reducing the ‘awareness of difficulties’ and increasing their confidence in talking about research in English. Second, the program aims at increasing the number of students participating in overseas study and exchange programs, as well as encouraging students to present their research outcomes in international conferences and or seminars in English.

The Luncheon Meeting in English is held once a week lunchtime during the school semester. The program is supported by the Graduate School of Sociology and is coordinated by the Director and a Research Fellow of the IASR. It is open to both undergraduate and graduate students, irrespective of their English proficiency. No registration is required ; students can participate even if they have missed some of the earlier sessions. The topic of discussion for each week is set in advance, usually by the participating students, allowing them enough time to think about and prepare for in advance. Participants use English and enjoy talking about issues related to sociology in a relaxed atmosphere without the fear of being misunderstood or embarrassed while having lunch or drinking coffee.

The meetings for the academic year 2019 were held during the lunch break on Wednesdays at the working space of the Collaborative Learning Room, School of Sociology. In its 4th academic year, the program experienced a relatively small attendance, particularly in the fall semester. This may be a result of schedule conflicts. The participants’ English levels were diverse, ranging from beginner to advanced. The discussion sessions on the selected topics shown in Table 1 below were facilitated by the Research Fellow of the IASR.

Table 1 Luncheon Meeting in English, 2019

Spring Semester 2019		
Session	Date	Topic of Discussion
1	4/12	‘Sociological Imagination’ Revisited : Concepts, Issues and Paradigms
2	4/17	The Cultural Sociology of Dance
3	4/24	Self-Presentation, Representation and the Self in the Digital Age
4	5/8	Refugee and Forced Migration : A Sociological Perspective
5	5/15	Mobility and the Sharing Economy
6	5/22	The Societal Impact of the Internet of Things (IoT)
7	5/29	Harassment and Bullying on Social Media
8	6/5	The Sociology of Spirituality and Superstition
9	6/12	Single Parenting and Teenage Mothers
10	6/19	The Sociology of Social Movements
11	6/26	Masculinity and Femininity in High School
12	7/3	The Culture of Apology
13	7/10	Astrosociology : A New Direction in Sociological Inquiry?
Fall Semester 2019		
1	9/25	Studying Sociology
2	10/2	Family in Japan : Sociological Perspectives
3	10/9	The Sociology of Dying, Death and Bereavement
4	10/16	Domestic Violence (DV) : Sociocultural Perspectives
5	10/23	Overtourism and Resistance
6	10/30	The Sociology of Fashion and Clothing
7	11/6	Human-Robot Relations in Japan
8	11/13	Sociological Perspectives on Global Climate Change
9	11/20	Minority Issues in Japan
10	11/27	The Sociology of Diversity
11	12/4	Gentrification : Conflict and Change in Post-Industrial Urban Japan
12	12/11	Gift as a Social Exchange
13	12/18	Digital Technology and Power
14	1/8	The Future of Sociology

An extracurricular learning program such as the Luncheon Meeting in English provides students with a space to practice and improve their communicative skills in English, an opportunity to

meet and engage regularly in sociological conversation with other students, and a path to study abroad and participate in international conferences or seminars. The program contributes to the university's efforts of developing students with excellent communicative skills in order to address global challenges as well as succeed in the highly competitive job market. Nevertheless, it's future depends largely on how well we address and overcome the barriers to program participation, such as scheduling conflicts, engagement across administrative and academic divisions, as well as greater promotion at university level.